

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Amendments to the Specification

In the Specification, the Examiner has objected to the abstract because it recites neither the process steps for the making of the finished non-woven article nor the organization or operation of the system utilized in the manufacture of the non-woven article. The abstract is now amended.

Amendments to the Claims

Claims 1-53 remain in this application. Claims 1 and 19 have been amended. Claims 35-53 have been withdrawn as the result of an earlier restriction requirement.

The Examiner has rejected claim 24 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention in that claim 24 is incomplete. The Examiner has also rejected claims 1-34 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) and 103(a) citing Frischer (US 5,989,380), Moroff et al. (US 4,324,832), Lavigne (*Pulp & Paper Dictionary*), Dudley (US 4,089,765), Wang et al.(US 5,935,880), Jellinek et al. (US 4,810,751) and GB2 292 082, either separately or in combination.

§ 102(b) & § 103(a) Rejections

The Examiner has rejected independent claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,324,832 to Moroff et al. in view of Lavigne (*Pulp & Paper Dictionary*) and Dudley (US 4,089,765); independent claim 19 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,989,380 to Frischer. The Examiner's rejections are respectfully traversed.

In a telephone interview on 22 February 2005, the limitation of claim 1(a) requiring "substantially continuous forming of a web of non-woven fabric." was discussed with the Examiner. The Examiner indicated that the claims, as written, were open to the interpretations given the references in the Office Action of 7 January 2005. In particular, although Moroff does not explicitly state forming a non-woven web, the reference does teach treating such a web. Consequently, forming of the web is inherent. Applicant asserts that the invention rests in the continuous, in-line processing of the material, from web-formation, through coating, to drying. It was suggested and the Examiner agreed that amending the claim language to better express this feature of the invention would be a good way to proceed with prosecution. Therefore, the amendments herein presented are directed toward a better expression of that feature of the instant invention.

That is to say, both Moroff et al. and Frischer clearly teach the use of commercially-available materials (paper or non-woven web):

Moroff in column 3, lines 37-39,

"...As substrates for impregnation, commercially-available raw decorative paper having conventional surface weight of 30-400 g/m² are employed..." (emphasis added).

Frischer in column 5, lines 22-25,

"...A material exhibiting paper-like properties suitable for use in the invention process may be obtained from Dexter Corporation, and is known as grade 11984..."

This clearly indicates that neither Moroff nor Frischer provide hint or suggestion of a continuous, in-line processing of the material, from web-formation, through coating, to drying.

This is in clear contrast to the instant invention that teaches: on page 10, lines 16-18,

"...The term 'in-line' as used herein as used herein refers to the actual production line that produces the non-woven fabric, terminating at the initial take-up roll..." (emphasis added);

on page 13, lines 20-22,

"...An innovation of the present invention is to apply a finishing agent to the still wet, damp or moist non-woven fabric in the production line before the fabric enters the final drying unit..." (emphasis added);

and in Figures 1 and 2.

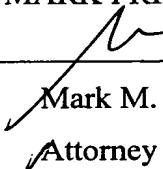
In order to further distinguish the features of the instant invention over the cited prior art, claims 1 and 19 are now amended to include the limitation of passing the non-woven fabric from the apparatus for forming the non-woven fabric to the finishing unit. This is clearly distinct from the methods of Moroff et al. and Frischer. Support for these amendments is found on page 10, lines 16-18, on page 13, lines 20-22 and in Figures 1 and 2.

The Applicant believes that the above comments completely overcome the Examiner's rejections of claims 1 and 19 on § 102(b) and § 103(a) grounds, thereby rendering the rejections of claims 2-18 and 20-34 moot since they are now shown to depend from allowable independent claims.

Appl. No. 10/667,419
Amdt. dated 21 MAR 2005
Reply to Office action of 7 JAN 2005

In view of the above amendments and remarks it is respectfully submitted that independent claims 1 and 19 and hence dependent claims 2-18 and 20-34, are in condition for allowance. Prompt notice of allowance is respectfully and earnestly solicited.

Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,
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